



# BLAIR COUNTY HEAD START

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Uncertainty remained the “new normal” for Child Advocates of Blair County/Blair County Head Start (CABC/BCHS) during the course of the 2021-2022 program year as the grip of the global pandemic slowly subsided and the agency acclimated to a return to regular routines. Staff retention and maintenance of child enrollment presented monumental barriers to the provision of exemplary services, resulting in a major restructuring of the program design for instruction and family participation. Despite these impediments, children returned to the classrooms eager to learn and families engaged, once again, in face-to-face interactions with staff. Several new initiatives were created and will continue to be a part of the ongoing continuous quality improvement implementation plan. A Chinese proverb states “*When the winds of change blow, some people build walls and others build windmills*”. The CABC/BCHS organization is prepared to build some new windmills.

*Terry Wasovich*  
**Executive Director**



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# PROGRAM PILOTS NEW EDITION OF CURRICULUM



BCHS implemented the Creative Curriculum 6th edition in 3 pilot classrooms during the 2021-22 program year. Classrooms were selected to participate in the pilot according to community demographics, classroom program option, and teacher experience with the Creative

Curriculum. The Creative Curriculum, Sixth edition, is "a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features hands-on, project-based investigations as a pathway to learning. Six foundation volumes further understandings of best practices and support teachers in creating a high-quality learning environment. The updated curriculum offers daily resources to help teachers plan and manage every teachable moment as they immerse children in dynamic and engaging learning experiences throughout the school day."\*

The data from these pilot classrooms show that children have a deeper love of learning as teachers help them develop confidence, creativity, and critical-thinking skills—all while promoting positive outcomes.

The classrooms investigated five studies over the course of the school year: Beginning of the Year Study, Clothes Study, Balls Study, Buildings Study, and the Tree Study. BCBS "curriculum coaches" helped to provide support and guidance to the classrooms participating in the pilot. Coaches closely monitored data, fidelity of curriculum implementation, and assisted with the preparation for the full transition of the new edition into classrooms for the upcoming 2022-23 program year.



**An assessment of the pilot** focused on CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) scores for which data indicated that classrooms



participating in the pilot scored higher in the areas of Emotional Support and Instructional Support than those not participating in the pilot. CLASS defines Emotional Support as the social and emotional function of children in the classroom and recognizes this as an indicator of school readiness. Instructional Support focuses on the ways in which teachers implement the curriculum they are using to effectively support cognitive and language development.

\*[www.teachingstrategies.com](http://www.teachingstrategies.com); *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Sixth Edition*

## HEAD START MONITORING

Blair County Head Start received a Notice of Award as a result of a successful five year competitive grant proposal submitted in October 2018, naming CABC as the grantee for the Blair County Head Start program. Funding for the current grant period extends through December 31, 2023. BCBS received its Focus Area 2 (FA2) review May 16 - 20, 2022. It was completed in a hybrid model with two reviewers on-site and two reviewers participating virtually. Six sections consisting of Program Design & Management, Education and Child Development Services, Health Program Services, Family & Community Engagement, Fiscal Infrastructure and ERSEA were reviewed. Strengths were noted in all six areas. The review brought to the program's attention the need to redesign the process for obtaining and tracking child health records.



**OFFICE OF HEAD START**

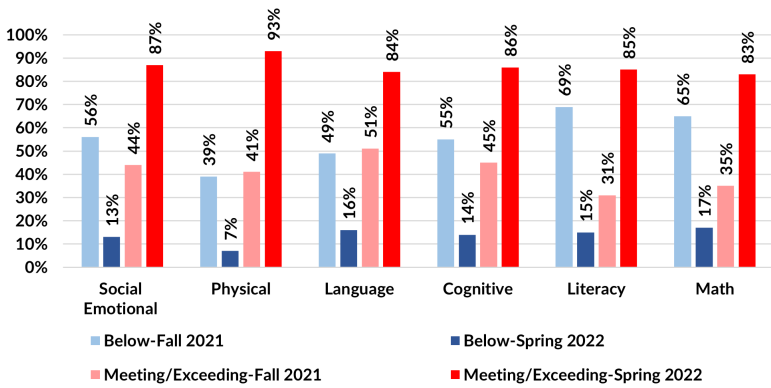
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

# TEACHER TRAINING



## CHILD OUTCOMES SHOW POSITIVE GROWTH

Fall 2021 vs. Spring 2022  
Children Below and Meeting/Exceeding Age-Level Expectations



Between the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022, Blair County Head Start documented improvement in all areas of the Teaching Strategies GOLD online child outcomes assessment.

The highest percentage of improvement was in the area of physical development with 39% of children entering the program below age-level expectations and upon exit, 93% were meeting or exceeding expectations. Language development was the second highest area of growth with nearly half of children falling below expectations in the fall of 2021 and by the end of the program year, 84% of children were meeting or exceeding goals for language.

The program's School Readiness & Education Advisory Committee determined a need to focus on literacy to improve age level expectations in the areas of emergent reading skills, print concepts and writing to convey meaning. Literacy goals will be included in the program's 2022-23 School Readiness Goal Plan.

The Teacher Child Interaction Training (TCIT) is an adaptation of Parent-Child Interaction Therapy for use with teachers and classrooms. TCIT is a classroom-wide training program that is both a prevention and intervention model to improve the social, emotional, and behavioral competence for children. TCIT has been shown to increase teacher-efficacy and job satisfaction for early childhood educators. *"A hallmark of the TCIT program is the use of constructive, positive, in-vivo coaching of teachers. Direct coaching allows the TCIT coach to provide immediate, positive feedback to shape and reinforce behaviors, adapt skills to address unique behavior problems, and fade out as teachers become more adept at using classroom behavior management skills".* TCIT has been scientifically tested since 2008 and research has consistently shown *"decreased frequency of disruptive behaviors, increased prosocial behaviors, and increased confidence for teachers, improved job satisfaction for teachers."*

BCHS data has mirrored these findings. The program plans to continue the implementation of TCIT to support children, teachers, and classroom communities.



Photo: Head Start children enrolled in the Roaring Spring location learn from Andrew Ritchey how ice cream is made during a field trip to Ritchey's Dairy in Martinsburg, PA.

# PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



## CASE MANAGEMENT QUICK FACTS

- **1,013 home visits** were completed by Case Managers in the 2021-22 program year, the majority of which were completed in person. Each family participates in at least 3 visits per program year and additional visits based on need.
- **246 virtual eligibility visits** completed by the program to process documentation and verify eligibility for program enrollment.
- **Over 265 deliveries** of meals and materials were made to family homes for children receiving virtual services during some portion of the program year.
- **Over 900 referrals** were made for families in 2021-22. Referrals were based on family requests and family goals which included (not limited to): mental and behavioral health, obtaining health insurance, food insecurity, housing assistance, medical and dental providers, legal counseling, employment and job training programs, parenting, emergency/crisis assistance and custody issues.
- **Over 700 goals** were set by families with the assistance of Case Managers who provided strategies for overcoming any barriers.

Each of the eight centers in operation during the 2021-22 program year held four family engagement activities during the year. As the Blair County Head Start program continued COVID-19 protocols throughout the duration for 2021-22, twenty-eight (28) of these events were held virtually and four (4) were held in person. Virtual events were held to ensure the safety of children, families and staff. Family engagement activities included virtual field trips to the Altoona Railroaders Museum and the Neil Armstrong Planetarium at the Altoona High School, crafts, homemade games, and fine and gross motor skill building activities. Activities focused on the whole family while emphasizing key pieces of school readiness to bridge the gap between school and home. Centers also conducted Parent Committee meetings in the same fashion, while also featuring additional family engagement opportunities, virtual field trips, book read alouds and accompanying crafts.

While in-person events are most ideal, the ease and convenience of virtual events allowed families to join live or watch at a later time. All activities and materials were provided to enrolled families prior to each event.





# ENROLLMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment continued to be a challenge in the 2021-22 program year due to pandemic related guidelines and restrictions requiring the program to social distance on the bus and in classrooms. A final ruling on universal masking and required COVID-19 vaccination for Head Start staff, contractors and volunteers exacerbated enrollment efforts to some degree resulting in both a reduction of enrolled children and a hesitancy for new enrollment. The Office of Head Start issued guidance in the previous funding year stating that program's current funding levels would not be reduced due to inability to serve funded enrollment amounts while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**355** CHILDREN ENROLLED IN 2021-22

FAMILIES SERVED IN 2021-22 **361**

**64%** AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

**156** TWO PARENT HOUSEHOLDS  
ONE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS **205**

**234** FAMILIES WITH AT LEAST ONE PARENT EMPLOYED

FAMILIES WITH AT LEAST ONE ADULT WITH AN ASSOCIATES DEGREE OR HIGHER **60**

**257** FAMILIES WITH ONE PARENT WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

PARENTS WHO ARE MILITARY VETERANS (2 ADDITIONAL ACTIVE DUTY) **19**

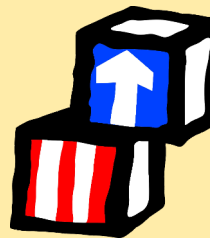
**39** FAMILIES CONSIDERED HOMELESS ACCORDING TO MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT



## INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT OFFERS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Families experiencing multiple barriers in progression towards family outcomes are referred to one of the two Intensive Case Managers (ICM) who have the time and resources to provide more intentional services leading to the achievement of planned outcomes.

Intensive Case Managers provide more focused and frequent support to families most in need. During the 2021-22 program year, ICMs completed over **480 home visits** with thirty-eight (38) families, assisting them in completing **over 530 goals**. ICMs also offered check-in visits to twenty-four (24) additional families to assist with varying needs over the summer break. Assistance was also offered to twenty-three (23) families facing barriers preventing them from enrolling their child in kindergarten for the upcoming school year.



*"Head Start has helped me as a parent to become a better parent."*

-Melanie S.

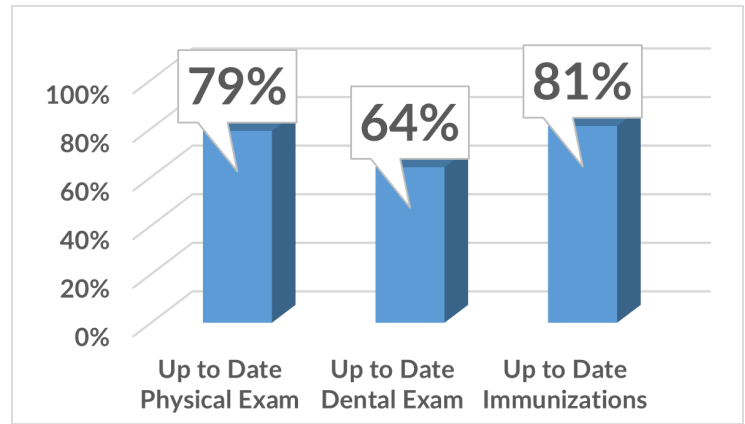
# OFFICE OF HEAD START COVID VACCINATION AND MASKING REQUIREMENTS

As part of President Biden's Path out of the Pandemic, the Office of Head Start (OHS) published an Interim Final Rule with Comment Period (IFC) on Nov. 30, 2021, requiring all staff, certain contractors, and volunteers to be vaccinated for COVID-19 by Jan. 31, 2022. The purpose of this IFC was to protect the health and safety of Head Start staff, children, and families; to mitigate the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, in Head Start programs; and to help more programs and early childhood centers safely remain open.

In response to the IFC, Blair County Head Start implemented agency policies and procedures requiring all staff to receive the second dose in a two-dose series or first of a single dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by January 31, 2022. Exemptions requests were reviewed and considered for those requesting exemption from the vaccination because of a medical condition or medical necessity that required a delay in vaccination, as documented by a licensed medical practitioner (as a reasonable accommodation under ADA); or a due to a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance (established under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Vaccination and masking procedures also highlighted the coordination with outside agencies and providers to continue masking protocol and provide attestations of vaccination for staff working directly with children within the Head Start program.

These policies and procedures were in addition to numerous others that were created by the program at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure safety of staff, children and families which included enhancing the comprehensive health assessment for all children to include specific COVID-19 related screening and assessment protocol, on-site and self screening procedures, agency-wide contact tracing, and adherence to isolation and quarantine guidance for both staff and children.

# CHILD HEALTH SNAPSHOT



Federal regulations require that Head Start programs work with families of enrolled children in obtaining physical and dental exams and up-to-date immunizations. Of the enrolled children in the 2021-2022 program year, 79% of children had an up-to-date physical exam, 64% of children had an up-to-date dental exam, and 81% of children were up-to-date on immunizations. As the pandemic continued on in the 2021-2022 program year, BCHS and the community at large continued to face a number of challenges in maintaining regular medical appointments.

## TRANSPORTATION 2021-22 FAST FACTS



**10** BUSES IN FLEET



**244** CHILDREN TRANSPORTED



**40,969** TOTAL TRIPS



**79,692** MILES LOGGED



# COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require all programs to conduct a full Community Assessment at least once during the five year grant period. The program's most recent full assessment was conducted in the spring of 2020 with additional updates since that time. The assessment includes data regarding community strengths, needs and resources.

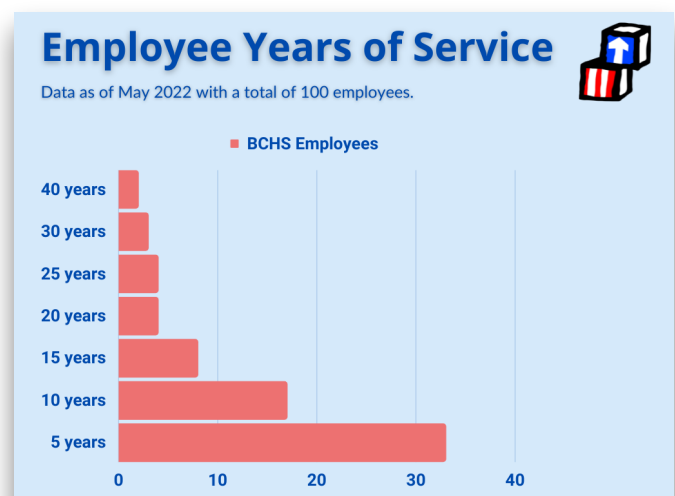
- The total population in Blair County according to the decennial 2020 Census is 122,822. According to the American Community Survey 2020 Estimates, there were 3,716 children below age three (3) and approximately 2,718 children ages 3 - 4 years old Blair County. Children ages 0-4 make up approximately 5.2% of the county's total population.
- The American Community Survey 2020 Estimates indicate that 2,662 families with children under the age of 5 are living at 23.3% below poverty level in Blair County.
- In Blair County, 2,331 grandparents lived with their grandchildren under 18 years old. Of those grandparents, 51.5% were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.
- In 2016-2020, 16.6% of households received SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). An estimated 41.6% of households that received SNAP had children under 18.
- Households that pay 30% or more of their income on housing costs are considered cost-burdened. In 2016-2020, cost-burdened households in Blair County accounted for nearly half of all renters (49.2%).
- Pre-K For PA indicates that 50% of eligible children in Blair County do not have access to high quality, publicly funded Pre-K indicating a nearly 20% decrease in comparison to 2019-20 data.
- Total reported incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect to the ChildLine Registry in Blair County decreased by over 19% from 2019 to 2020, indicating the impact of pandemic related closures that resulted in reduced interaction between critical community services and the families they serve.



## EMPLOYEE YEARS OF SERVICE & EXPERIENCE

Blair County Head Start is extremely fortunate to employ many individuals who have dedicated their careers to working for the program. In 2021-2022, 13% of BCHS employees had been with the program at least 20 years and 25% between 10 and 15 years. Employees working directly with children in the classroom had a combined total of 436 years of experience. This longevity equates to a solid knowledge base of the Head Start program requirements and the vast experience to ensure high quality service delivery across all areas of the program.

As part of the program's Staff Wellness plan, BCHS will continue to recognize employees for years of service through various staff appreciation efforts throughout the program year.



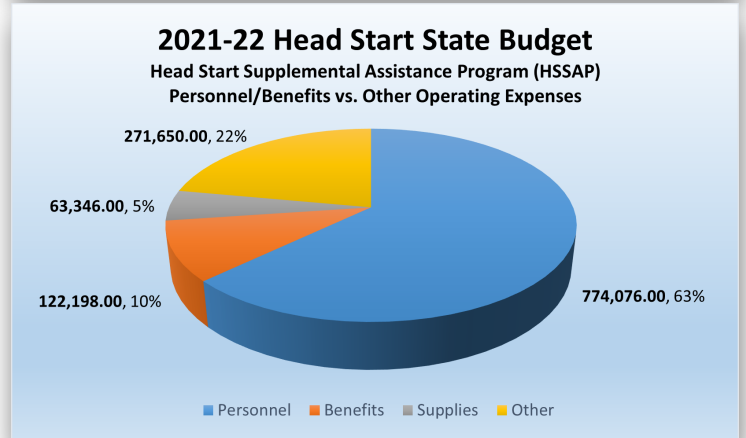
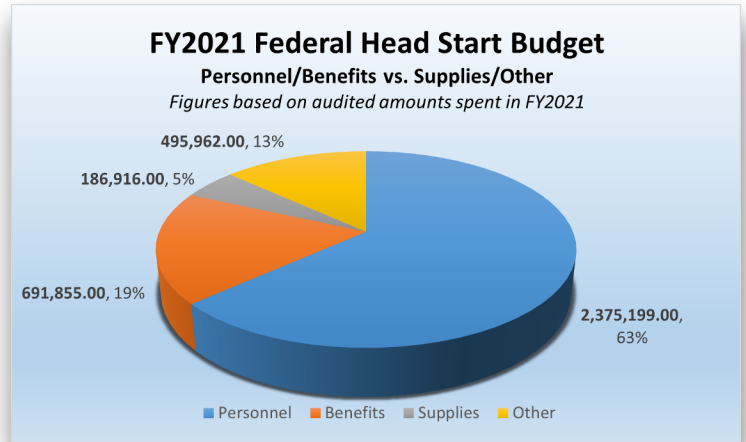
# BUDGET & EXPENDITURES

Child Advocates of Blair County, Inc. (CABC), the grantee for the Head Start program in Blair County, was funded to serve a total of 469 children county wide with federal and state funds.

In FY2021, CABC received \$4,025,771.00 in federal funding from the Administration for Children & Families to serve 359 children. CABC received \$1,231,720.00 in Pennsylvania State Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) funds to serve 110 children in the 2021-22 program year. In both the Federal and State budgets, personnel wages and benefits assume 63% of the entire budget for both grants.

As a result of ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic, supplemental funds to support one-time activities in response to COVID-19 were distributed to the program in April 2021. Funding in the amount of \$483,386 from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) will be used to support discretionary compensation for staff to include sign on incentives and staff retention and referral incentives as well as to support various facility upgrades. Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) funds in the amount of \$121,592 were used for the installation of a dumbwaiter and a first floor ramp at the Greenwood Center that will be used to facilitate food service and supply distribution. Both ARP and CRRSA funds expire in March 2023.

The most recent financial audit for January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021 was performed by Young, Oakes, Brown & Company, certified public accountants. In the independent auditor's report, the auditors expressed a "clean opinion" showing no findings of non-conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.



# CABC, INC. PROGRAMMING



In addition to being the grantee for Blair County Head Start, CABC, Inc. provides additional programs that serve children, families and adolescents across the county.

## PENNSYLVANIA PRE-K COUNTS

CABC is one of several grantees for PA Pre-K Counts in Blair County and currently supports 87 children in five classrooms located in Altoona, Claysburg Roaring Spring and Williamsburg. To qualify for the PA Pre-K Counts program, children must be 3 years of age by the school district's cut-off date for kindergarten in their home school district and meet specific household income guidelines (at the 300% federal poverty level). **For more information about CABC Pre-K Counts, call 814-946-5247 ext.101.**

## TEEN LINK CONNECTION

Teen Link Connection offers the **CHOICES** summer empowerment program for male residents ages 8-12 and female residents ages 12-16 at Evergreen Manors. CHOICES provides information and support to children and their parents to better enable them to make positive choices regarding things such as drugs, alcohol, smoking, healthy relationships, human trafficking, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. **For more information about programming under Teen Link Connection, call 814-941-TEEN (8336)**

# SOCIAL MEDIA



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